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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Tenth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 238th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 1 November 1995, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mrs. BELEMBAOGO

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GE.95-19327 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 4) (continued)

Italy (CRC/C/8/Add.18) (CRC/C.10/WP.2) (continued)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Torella di Romagnano (Italy) took a place at the Committee table.

2. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to give their preliminary conclusions on the initial report of Italy.

3. Mrs. SARDENBERG commended the Italian delegation on its readiness to answer the questions raised during discussion of the report. She hoped that the dialogue with the Committee would encourage the Government to reaffirm its commitment to implementing the Convention.

4. Further efforts needed to be made to see that the provisions of the Convention were made an integral part of governmental action on children in all its phases - planning, policy formulation, budgetary allocation and the implementation and evaluation of programmes. She welcomed the willingness of the Government to revise not only its legislation, but also its policies on children, and would like to see non-governmental organizations more closely involved in the follow-up to the Committee's recommendations. In particular, there was a need for some coordinating mechanism in order to avoid duplication of effort and to maximize resources.

5. She had been struck by the disparities in the treatment of children in Italy, not only between different regions, but also between different groups. Special attention needed to be paid to the situation of foreign children, Gypsy children, and children of minorities and public opinion in that regard should be changed through education. The child should be seen as an integral human being, not only with needs, but also with rights.

6. Mr. HAMMARBERG said that discussion in the Committee should be regarded not as a mere formality, but rather as a practical exercise, leading to change. He suggested that the Italian delegation should consider how it could pass on the conclusions reached in the discussion so as to ensure that they were acted on. It could, for instance, prepare a commentary on the Committee's concluding observations and submit it to Parliament. Another possibility would be for the records of the discussion on that commentary to be made public, so that other sectors could become involved in the process. Compliance with the Convention called for a comprehensive strategy on the part of the Government, reflecting a real political will to improve the situation of the country's children. A major element in that strategy would be to make structures for decision-making more effective, notably through mechanisms for inter-ministerial coordination. There should also be a system for reviewing progress made in implementing the Convention, for instance by annual reports to Parliament. The report by the National Observatory for Children that had been referred to was a step in the right direction. There should also be some system of independent monitoring and machinery for consultation with non-governmental bodies so that the Government could benefit from their expertise and experience.

7. He also suggested that the Government should look more closely into how the concept of the best interests of the child should be interpreted in an Italian context, since the report had been somewhat thin on that point. In respect of article 4 of the Convention, the Government should study how the budget process could be designed to ensure that the maximum available resources were spent on meeting children's needs. The work done by the Innocenti Development Centre in Florence could be helpful in that connection.

8. Mrs. BADRAN said there was a need for a critical review of the education system in Italy, particularly with regard to the relationship between the public and private sectors. Among the problems to be studied were dropout rates, the allocation of resources to education and how the subject of human rights could be included in the school curriculum. A programme should be launched to increase awareness of the Convention among professionals in the various sectors working with children.

9. Mrs. SANTOS PAIS thanked the Italian delegation for its openness and willingness to respond to questions.

10. She suggested that a permanent mechanism might be set up to collect data on a systematic basis on all areas dealt with by the Convention. Such a mechanism could ensure coordination between the different bodies working with children and could also evaluate and monitor progress or lack of progress. It would then be easier for the Government to formulate policies and to identify targets for future action. The same mechanism could help to build a memory and research capacity, which, because it was independent, would not be affected by political instability. It could also help to identify groups of children that were especially vulnerable and in need of assistance and could encourage coordination between national, regional and municipal entities in ensuring that the best use was made of existing resources. Lastly, it could help to promote public scrutiny of Government policies.

11. She had noted that there was as yet no systematic campaign in Italy for disseminating information on the Convention or for training teachers, judges, lawyers, social workers, the police, prison officers and law enforcement officials in how to interpret it: that situation should be remedied. The social sector should be given priority in budgetary allocation, with special emphasis on the needs of disadvantaged groups of children, and Italy should do all it could to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) for official development assistance.

12. She too would urge the Government to consider in greater detail how to apply one of the basic concepts of the Convention, that of the best interests of the child, particularly with regard to children born out of wedlock, poor children, Gypsy children and foreign children. More assistance should be given to families in need, as well as to single-parent families, so that they would be better able to meet their responsibilities towards their children. That might help to prevent the institutionalization of children from being seen as a solution to the problem of poverty and might also help to prevent juvenile delinquency.

13. On the question of corporal punishment, she hoped that the dialogue with the Committee might encourage the Italian authorities to consider deleting the concept of non-excessive modes of correction from the Penal Code. In dealing with the problem of child labour, more attention should be given to prevention through campaigns to increase public awareness. Steps should also be taken to ensure that children stayed within the education system and did not try to acquire skills outside it by clandestine work. It was important for the judiciary, when imposing penalties for juvenile delinquency, to try to prevent the stigmatization of poor, Gypsy or foreign children, which could foment intolerance and xenophobia.

14. Lastly, she was encouraged to note that the National Observatory for Children was to submit an annual report to Parliament on the situation of children in Italy. She hoped that the priorities that had been identified in the course of the dialogue would be reflected in that report and asked that copies of it should be sent to the Committee on a regular basis so that members could be kept informed.

15. Mr. KOLOSOV said he had no doubt that Italy's next report would show great advances. His only recommendation was that the Government should act more speedily to implement resolutions adopted by various international bodies and congresses on issues concerning children.

16. The CHAIRPERSON thanked the Italian delegation for the very full information provided and for its readiness to cooperate with the Committee. A number of problems had been identified, including corporal punishment within the family, the large number of children in institutions and the situation of children belonging to disadvantaged groups. She hoped the dialogue with the Committee would inspire the Government to take steps to deal with those problems.

17. It had been suggested that national policies towards children should be improved, that there should be better mobilization of resources to meet children's needs at the local and regional levels and that a mechanism for inter-ministry coordination and for the monitoring and implementation of programmes should be set up. The system of data collection should be made permanent and its findings used to improve programmes for children. The Committee had also suggested that more use should be made of non-governmental organizations. There should be a campaign to increase public awareness of the Convention and it should be a subject taught both in schools and in universities and in training institutions. She hoped the Government would take all necessary steps to see that the conclusions of its dialogue with the Committee were widely publicized.

18. The Committee had also suggested that the Government should study certain specific issues, especially the concept of the best interests of the child and the concept of non-discrimination, to see how they could be better applied not only in legislation, but also in programmes. It had urged greater harmonization between the public and private sectors in education and the speeding up of the process of the revision of the Penal Code. She hoped the Government would give an account of progress made on those points in subsequent written communications to the Committee.

19. Mr. TORELLA di ROMAGNANO (Italy) said the debate had been fruitful and interesting and he was confident that his Government's cooperation with the Committee would continue in the future. Before Italy's next report was due in five years' time, it would be submitting progress reports, particularly the annual reports of the National Observatory for Children, to the Committee. He would convey the Committee's observations and recommendations to the competent bodies in his country and also to Parliament.

20. At the time when the Convention had entered into force, Italy's legislation had already been very advanced as far as the rights of children were concerned. The country was currently going through a difficult transition period and had not yet achieved political stability, and that was why some sectors of the public administration had been somewhat slow to take action. The Convention, although ratified by Italy in 1991, was still relatively new, and that was one reason why it had not become better known. However, his authorities would now be stimulated to increase public awareness of it.

21. He stressed that, by tradition, Italy was a country that loved children. Recent reports of ill-treatment of children both within the family and in institutions were indeed deplorable, but he believed they were isolated cases. In particular, he was convinced that there was no real discrimination in Italy towards children of different origins or religions.

22. He again thanked the Committee for the attention given to the report and for its recommendations, which would be given due consideration by his Government.

23. The CHAIRPERSON thanked the Italian representative for his statement and noted that consideration of the report of Italy was now concluded.

24. Mr. TORELLA di ROMAGNANO (Italy) withdrew.

The meeting was suspended at 4.45 p.m. and resumed at 4.55 p.m.

COOPERATION WITH OTHER UNITED NATIONS BODIES, SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER COMPETENT BODIES (agenda item 7)

25. The CHAIRPERSON invited Mr. Dyer, representative of the Hague Conference on Private International Law, to address the Committee.

26. Mr. DYER (Hague Conference on Private International Law) recalled that he had appeared before the Committee on several occasions in connection with certain Hague Conference conventions dealing with specific aspects of the rights of children. The first of those conventions was the 1980 Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, which had been in force for nearly 12 years. It had 43 parties, and some 400 judicial decisions had been handed down in some 20 countries in application of that Convention. The Hague Conference had been concerned to ensure the proper operation of the Convention over the years and had held two specific meetings to review its operation. The parties to that Convention had continued to increase at the rate of two or three a year.

27. The Conference had recently informed the Committee about the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption, which had been signed in 1993. At the present time, the Convention had nine parties, the most recent ratification being that of Costa Rica. Ratifications came from all regions of the world and the Hague Conference looked forward to the Convention playing an important role in connection with the protection of children's interests and rights in relation to intercountry adoption.

28. The Hague Conference had been involved for more than a year in revising the 1961 Hague Convention concerning the powers of authorities and the law applicable in respect of the protection of infants, which was much more general in scope and reflected the period in which it had been drafted. It had 11 States parties at present. The Hague Conference had held two meetings for drafting purposes in February and September 1995 at which the Committee on the Rights of the Child had been ably represented by an observer, Mrs. Sardenberg. A distinctive feature of the revised Convention, which was entitled "the preliminary draft Convention on the Protection of Children", was that it contained a separate chapter on cooperation between countries in connection with the protection of children. At the meeting held in September 1995, a specific provision on refugee children had been tentatively adopted. During the preparatory work on the Intercountry Adoption Convention, there had been close contacts with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, but it had subsequently been decided not to include a specific reference to refugee children in that Convention. A meeting on the refugee child problem had, however, subsequently been held and a recommendation adopted on that problem. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had since distributed the recommendation to its field offices with a view to providing some guidance on questions involving intercountry adoption in the context of refugee or displaced children.

29. The Hague Conference had been active in the area of child protection since the 1950s. For example, it had prepared the Convention on the Law Applicable to Maintenance Obligations Towards Children in 1956. That Convention had been signed in 1958 and had been in force for many years. It had been decided at the recent meeting of the Hague Conference that a special committee meeting would be held to review the operation of the 1956 and 1958 Conventions on Maintenance Obligations and that the 1956 New York Convention on Recovery Abroad of Maintenance would be included in that review. The Hague Conference would send a report on the special committee's meeting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Conventions on maintenance obligations operated in parallel and were intended to ensure that persons responsible for caring for children had the necessary resources to do so.

30. Mrs. SARDENBERG said that she had been pleased to participate in the meeting on the revision of the 1961 Hague Convention on the Protection of Infants. The Committee's participation in the meeting at the Hague had demonstrated how important the Convention on the Rights of the Child was as a basic international framework for the implementation of the rights of the child.

regulation of certain aspects of the problem, such as publicity for international sex tourism or cooperation on the rehabilitation of sexually exploited children. The Conference was certainly open to discussing possible avenues of cooperation with the Committee in that regard.

38. In reply to Mr. Kolosov, he said that the Conference's texts were very specific and were applied differently in specific contexts, so it had no difficulty in referring to children in the plural; that could, however, change. As to limiting the scope of article 2 to unborn children, it would be difficult to take many of the measures in question with regard to unborn children, as the measures would have to be taken for their mothers as well. That was why the Conference had differed from the United Nations Convention by excluding those children. The Conference had also rejected the suggestion made by the International Union of Latin Notaries on the inclusion of unborn children in connection with property rights.

39. Mrs. SANTOS PAIS welcomed the fact that the Hague Conference, which had contributed to the process of drafting the United Nations Convention, had in turn been able to incorporate principles of the Convention in some of its recent texts.

40. Mrs. EUFEMIO said that, of the nine signatories of the Hague Convention, two had not yet ratified the United Nations Convention. She asked whether any progress had been made in the drafting of a form for the consent of the child to adoption.

41. Mr. DYER (Hague Conference) said that a draft form had been included in the draft report of the October meeting of the Conference and would be discussed further.

42. The CHAIRPERSON said that, in the area of international adoption, the Hague Convention was of great usefulness for the implementation of the United Nations Convention.

43. Miss MASON asked what factors determined the issues to be taken up by the Conference. The Convention covered four issues, namely, protection, development, survival and participation. In relation to children, would any of those influence the enactment of another convention?

44. Mr. DYER (Hague Conference) said that there was a structural process for determining the subject of the Conference's conventions. Proposed topics were received from Governments, the secretariat and other international organizations and it would therefore be appropriate for the Committee to submit proposals as well. The result of that process was the agenda for future work, which was revised and updated every four years by the diplomatic conferences. None of the recommendations for future conventions concerned children.

45. Mr. PICARD (International Labour Organization (ILO)), summarizing recent developments in the ILO's actions against child labour said that, on 7 November 1995, a discussion would be held by the Governing Body, in preparation for which the Committee on Employment and Social Policy had drafted a document on child labour. The document would serve as a basis for

an exchange of views in order to dispel certain mistaken impressions especially the idea that the only interesting aspect of child labour was that performed in export industries which was in fact only a small part of their work. Secondly, the meeting would determine the most appropriate means for eliminating child labour and suggest directions for future ILO action in the field. The Governing Body would also consider a proposal for the 1998 International Labour Conference on assessing the international programme for the elimination of child labour and determining whether new measures should be taken.

46. As described in the above-mentioned document on child labour, there was a general ignorance of the extent of work by children and no statistics were available. The document also discussed the nature, causes and financial implications of child labour and possible national strategies for combating it, including improving knowledge of the issue and national action plans. It referred to possible measures for eliminating child labour, such as lengthening the period of compulsory schooling, providing free education and economic measures. ILO action in that regard was normative, through the promotion and monitoring of standards, and might also include a possible new international convention on the prohibition of the most intolerable forms of child labour, which would be considered at the 1998 Conference. Other matters to be discussed were research, information and international cooperation.

47. The CHAIRPERSON, summarizing the informal mission undertaken from 2 to 7 October 1995 in South Asia by several members of the Committee on the issue of child labour, said that the members of the mission had met with national authorities in each country, as well as with partners such as United Nations organizations and non-governmental organizations working either with children or on behalf of children's rights. A regional consultation on child labour had also helped enhance the Committee's knowledge of the subject. Child labour included industrial and informal work in such areas as agriculture and domestic service. Following the consultation, UNICEF had agreed to develop a subregional strategy for continuing inter-organizational work on the question. Contacts with national authorities had been very helpful, and the Committee had been encouraged by their willingness to participate in follow-up. There was further need for cooperation between UNICEF and the ILO on the elimination of child labour.

48. Mrs. SANTOS PAIS said that the mission's meetings with United Nations organizations and donor countries had been very helpful and that the donor countries had been encouraged to direct more of their aid to children.

REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS RELEVANT TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE (agenda item 5)

49. Mrs. SANTOS PAIS, (Rapporteur), introducing the annual overview of developments of interest to the Committee, said that it provided an opportunity for the Committee to assess the impact of its work on children's rights. The Committee should ask itself how it could better influence the activities of other organizations; whether issues it had not yet addressed should be addressed; and whether the overview could be relevant to strengthening international solidarity on behalf of children. The Secretariat's efforts in the evaluation of United Nations system activities needed more human and material resources.

50. The International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development and the question of juvenile justice all had implications for the Committee's work. Like the Convention, the Programme of Action adopted by the Population Conference stressed the need for States and families to give the highest possible priority to children and, in that spirit, the best interests of the child would be the principle that guided the work of those responsible for the child's education and training. The Programme of Action also contained a chapter on the girl child, which addressed the need for eliminating discrimination and encouraged the full participation of girls in the development of their societies, while expressing concern about child marriage. As had so often been recommended by the Committee when it had discussed the question of the definition of the child and the basic principle of non-discrimination, the Programme of Action stressed that marriage should be based only on the free and full consent of the intending spouses and that laws should be enforced concerning the minimum legal age of consent and marriage. It also dealt with the composition and structure of the family and the need for Government measures to support the family, particularly single-parent households, and to protect children against economic exploitation. It further stressed the importance of increasing the earning power of adults in economically deprived families and of enabling children to be educated rather than compelled to work.

51. The Programme of Action paid particular attention to the question of abuse, neglect, harassment, violence and exploitation of children and the need to take measures to eliminate those phenomena through preventive actions, rehabilitation programmes and the effective protection of the rights of those who might be at risk. The special risks faced by girls, in particular when in domestic service, internally displaced or seeking refuge, as well as those who were victims of armed conflicts, were clearly identified.

52. The Programme of Action also paid crucial attention to the fields of data collection, evaluation, monitoring and research, identifying two major objectives: the strengthening of national capacity to meet the need for basic data collection, analysis and dissemination; and political commitment to and understanding of the need for data collection on a regular basis and for the analysis, dissemination and full utilization of data. The Programme of Action stressed the role non-governmental organizations could play as partners in national policies, as well as the role of parliamentarians in enacting appropriate domestic legislation, allocating appropriate financial resources, ensuring accountability of expenditure and raising public awareness.

53. In relation to resource mobilization and allocations, the Programme of Action recognized that domestic resources provided the largest portion of funds for development policies, but further acknowledged that the least developed and poorest countries, often undergoing painful structural adjustments, would need to see their national resources supplemented by financial and technical resources from the international community.

54. With regard to the follow-up to the Conference, the Programme called for a review on a regular basis of the specific needs of countries and for maximizing the availability of resources and their most effective use. That was an area where the Committee's monitoring activities, the consideration of periodic reports and the identification and promotion of programmes of

technical cooperation could be of decisive relevance. She suggested that the Committee's concluding observations and the areas for technical assistance proposed therein might serve as a basis for contributions submitted by the Committee to the Secretary-General in accordance with that Programme of Action.

55. Although the Committee had decided to ensure it was represented at the World Summit for Social Development, that had not been possible, and that was perhaps why the documents adopted in Copenhagen did not mention either the Convention on the Rights of the Child or the Committee's contribution to promoting and attaining the Summit's goals and commitments.

56. It had to be concluded that such failure to involve the treaty bodies and, in particular, the Committee in the preparatory process and in the United Nations conferences organized to address areas of importance for their different mandates seriously undermined the results of those conferences and was a misuse of the potential available to create greater awareness of common concerns and to mobilize efforts to make political commitments a living reality. It was hard to accept that the World Summit had considered the reality of children without any reference to the main instrument which provided the framework for action on their behalf.

57. The World Summit had nevertheless reiterated important principles and stressed the need to respect, observe and protect human rights and to promote democracy, social justice and solidarity, as well as the equitable distribution of income. It had also emphasized the need to enhance the equality of status, welfare and opportunities of the girl child.

58. The World Summit had attached importance to transparent and accountable governance and administration and the final document it had adopted established a close link between transparency and accountability, on the one hand, and popular participation, on the other. It also stressed the need to strengthen the opportunities and abilities of civil society and, in particular, the contribution by people of all age groups. National policies within a stable legal framework were consequently of crucial importance and the World Summit had pointed to the need, at the budgetary level, for national policies to be developed to promote and mobilize domestic savings and attract external resources for social programmes, while protecting basic social programmes from budget reductions. The impact of structural adjustment programmes on social development should also be reviewed to reduce their negative effects and to ensure they gave priority to human resource development and further promoted the development of democratic institutions.

59. The World Summit had also called for debt conversion to be applied to social development programmes and encouraged international donors and multilateral development banks to support countries' efforts to implement people-centred sustainable development policies. It had reaffirmed the need for increased official development assistance and for the achievement of the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for overall official development assistance.

60. There had been several important developments in the field of the administration of juvenile justice in 1995 and she drew attention to some of the main recommendations that had been made. Juvenile justice should be given priority within the United Nations system and close coordination ensured between the Committee and other mechanisms within the United Nation system. Programmes of technical assistance should take account of recommendations made by the Committee. States had been urged to establish a child-oriented juvenile justice system and attention had been drawn to the need for information, training and technical assistance. The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice had been invited to promote technical cooperation projects on the improvement of juvenile justice systems on the basis of United Nations standards. The lack of references to the Convention on the Rights of the Child was the result of the Committee's absence from both the Ninth Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders and from the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

61. One of the main topics discussed in connection with juvenile justice had been violence against children. All forms of violence against children and all other violations of their human rights had been strongly condemned. It had been emphasized that the elimination of violence against children was one of the priorities of the United Nations crime prevention and criminal justice programme and that work on that problem should be undertaken in close collaboration with the Committee on the Rights of the Child. That offered the Committee a significant opportunity to publicize and share its views on the decisive question of violence against children and its unacceptability in the light of articles 19, 28 and 37 of the Convention.

62. Mr. KOLOSOV pointed out that, although the Committee had not participated in the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders, the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been referred to on a number of occasions and, in particular, in Congress resolution No. 7.

63. With regard to question of child labour, the Committee had received a document prepared by the Governing Body of the International Labour Office (GB.264/ESP/1) paragraph 88 of which referred to the possibility that Convention No. 138 might be included in the list of those on which a report was required every two years rather than every five years. That would be a welcome innovation.

64. In the Committee's discussions with national authorities during its mission to South Asia, it had been apparent that not all of them shared the same view of the importance of eliminating child labour. For example, the mayor of Jaipur had expressed the opinion that efforts to eliminate child labour were politically motivated and had stated that the conditions of poverty prevailing in south India made it vital for children to work, although he had recognized that they needed better protection. The Committee should bear in mind that not everybody in South Asia was convinced of the importance of eliminating child labour.

65. The CHAIRPERSON said that, although references had been made to the Convention on the Rights of the Child at the World Summit on Social Development, the Committee might regret the rather timid nature of those references. If the Committee had been involved in the preparatory work for the World Summit, its representation might have been somewhat more assertive.

66. On 19 June 1995, the chairpersons of the six human rights treaty bodies had met with the Secretary-General of the United Nations in New York, and had had an opportunity to express their concerns to the Secretary-General. They had informed him of the financial, material and human difficulties the secretariats of all the treaty bodies faced, of delays in the submission of reports by countries and of delays in the consideration of reports because committees did not have enough sessions. The question of the status of the treaty bodies in respect of world human rights conferences had also been raised.

67. The chairpersons had made a number of recommendations to the Secretary-General on the need to strengthen the resources available to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights. They had also recommended that the treaty bodies should be given a clearly defined status within the United Nations system so that the nature of their participation in United Nations conferences would also be clearly defined. They had recommended that their meeting with the Secretary-General should be institutionalized and had emphasized the need to give wider publicity to the mandate of the United Nations, in connection not only with peacekeeping, but also with human rights, drawing attention to the valuable preventive role that human rights activities could play on behalf of peacekeeping.

68. The Secretary-General had recognized the need for special efforts on behalf of the human rights bodies and had assured the chairpersons that he would do his utmost to implement their recommendations despite the Organization's current financial difficulties. He had also endorsed the recommendation that the meeting between him and the chairpersons should be institutionalized. At the sixth meeting of the persons chairing the human rights bodies, it had been recommended that the meeting with the Secretary-General should be an annual one.

69. The sixth meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies had discussed the question of delays in the submission of reports and two bodies, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, had recommended that the number of their sessions should be increased. The chairpersons had recognized the role played by non-governmental organizations in treaty follow-up and had emphasized the need to enhance cooperation between the different committees and to strengthen their secretariats. They had also drawn attention to the need to promote international human rights instruments and had welcomed the planned study on the reservations formulated by States when acceding to human rights instruments. They had taken note with satisfaction of the role played by the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights, together with UNICEF, in increasing the number of States that had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had encouraged other United Nations agencies to follow suit. They had recommended that the Plan of Action for the

United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education should be taken into consideration by all the treaty bodies in their activities and that the treaty bodies should participate in the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements and other forthcoming international conferences with a bearing on human rights.

70. They had also recommended that each treaty body should be provided with an independent budget to enable it to carry out certain specific activities and that the General Assembly should adopt an amendment to article 20 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to allow the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to increase the number of its sessions.

71. The chairpersons had reaffirmed the recommendations made by the Working Group on Gender on the integration of gender into the work of the treaty bodies and, in particular, the need to take gender into account in the preparatory work for the consideration of reports, in the guidelines prepared by the treaty bodies and in all other relevant aspects of their procedures. Referring to the prevention of human rights violations, they had emphasized the need to encourage the machinery developed by each of the bodies in its particular area of activity and the treaty bodies had been invited to submit a report on relevant developments to the meetings of chairpersons.

72. With regard to assistance to States in the implementation of recommendations made by the treaty bodies, the chairpersons had recommended that the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights should pay particular attention to proposals concerning advisory services and technical assistance and that technical assistance programmes should be planned in cooperation with all the organizations concerned.

73. Mrs. BADRAN said that almost all the priority issues to which the Chairperson had referred had been discussed at earlier meetings of persons chairing human rights bodies, in particular delays in the submission and consideration of reports, the need for additional secretariat resources and the question of reservations. It was regrettable that there was apparently no solution to those problems, which came up again and again.

74. The CHAIRPERSON said that, although she agreed with Mrs. Badran, she thought that the meeting between the persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies and the Secretary-General had been a positive development. The chairpersons had requested the meeting because they were weary of dealing with the same problems over and over again. They had recommended that such an annual meeting with the Secretary-General should be institutionalized. That too was a positive development. Another positive aspect was the planned study of the reservations formulated by States when acceding to human rights instruments. It would determine why States formulated such reservations and how they could be discouraged from doing so.

75. Mr. KOLOSOV said that, in one sense, the Committee was fortunate that there were delays in the submission of reports because, if all the reports due had been submitted, it would be unable to deal with the workload. As the situation stood, it already had enough work to keep it busy for two years.

76. Referring to a recommendation by the Secretary-General that regional bodies should be invited to attend future meetings of persons chairing human rights treaty bodies, he suggested that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe should be included in those meetings in view of the importance it had acquired in the human rights field.

77. He was unable to accept the general comment of the Human Rights Committee on reservations (CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.6). He pointed out that, if States were not allowed to formulate reservations, some of which were undoubtedly necessary, the process of accession by States to human rights treaties would be delayed.

78. The CHAIRPERSON said that the Committee on the Rights of the Child was in a special position with regard to delays in the consideration of reports, as it was one of only two committees that were fortunate enough to be able to hold three sessions per year.

79. Regional bodies had participated for the first time in the sixth meeting of persons chairing human rights treaty bodies, and she assured Mr. Kolosov that she would bring his suggestion concerning the participation of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to the attention of next meeting of chairpersons.

80. She agreed that the general comment by the Human Rights Committee should not jeopardize the right of States to formulate reservations, although the chairpersons had been concerned with reservations which were either unnecessary or which encroached on the human rights instruments. Tunisia, for example, had recognized that it had made an unnecessary reservation and had withdrawn it.

81. Mrs. SANTOS PAIS said that the Committee was indeed lucky to be authorized to hold three sessions each year. The meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies was an indispensable means of improving the flow of information between the different committees and enabling them to learn from one another's experience. Although the same concerns were repeatedly expressed, the recommendation that treaty bodies should have an independent budget to allow them to perform specific tasks was important. She noted that, if the treaty bodies seemed still to be facing the same problems, it was perhaps because they were not represented either in the General Assembly or in the Commission on Human Rights, which were never informed directly about their activities and the problems they faced. She urged that consideration should be given to the possibility of the treaty bodies being represented when those bodies met.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.